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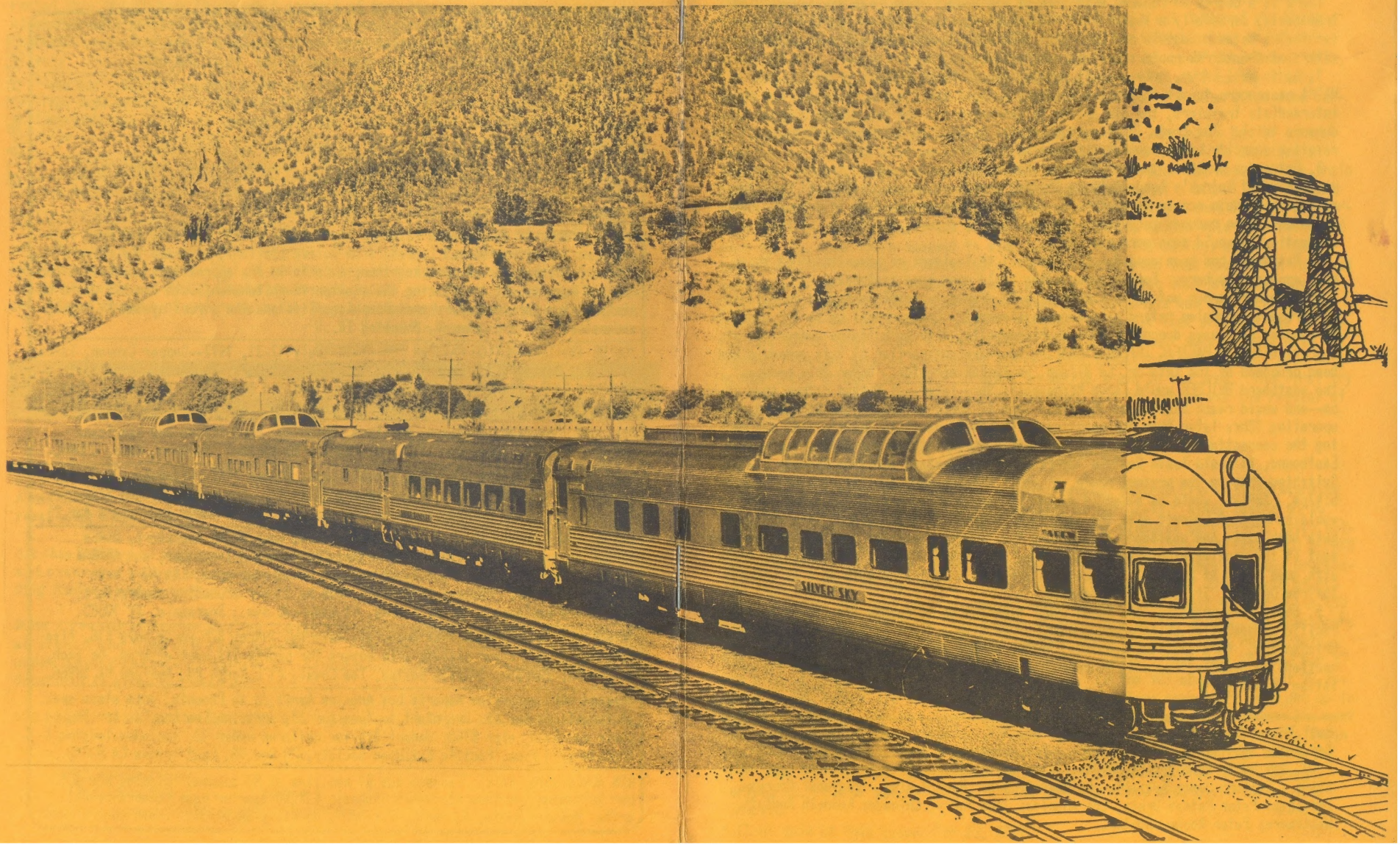
RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

40¢
VOL. 7 NO. 5
FIRST ISSUE OF
MARCH 1977
149



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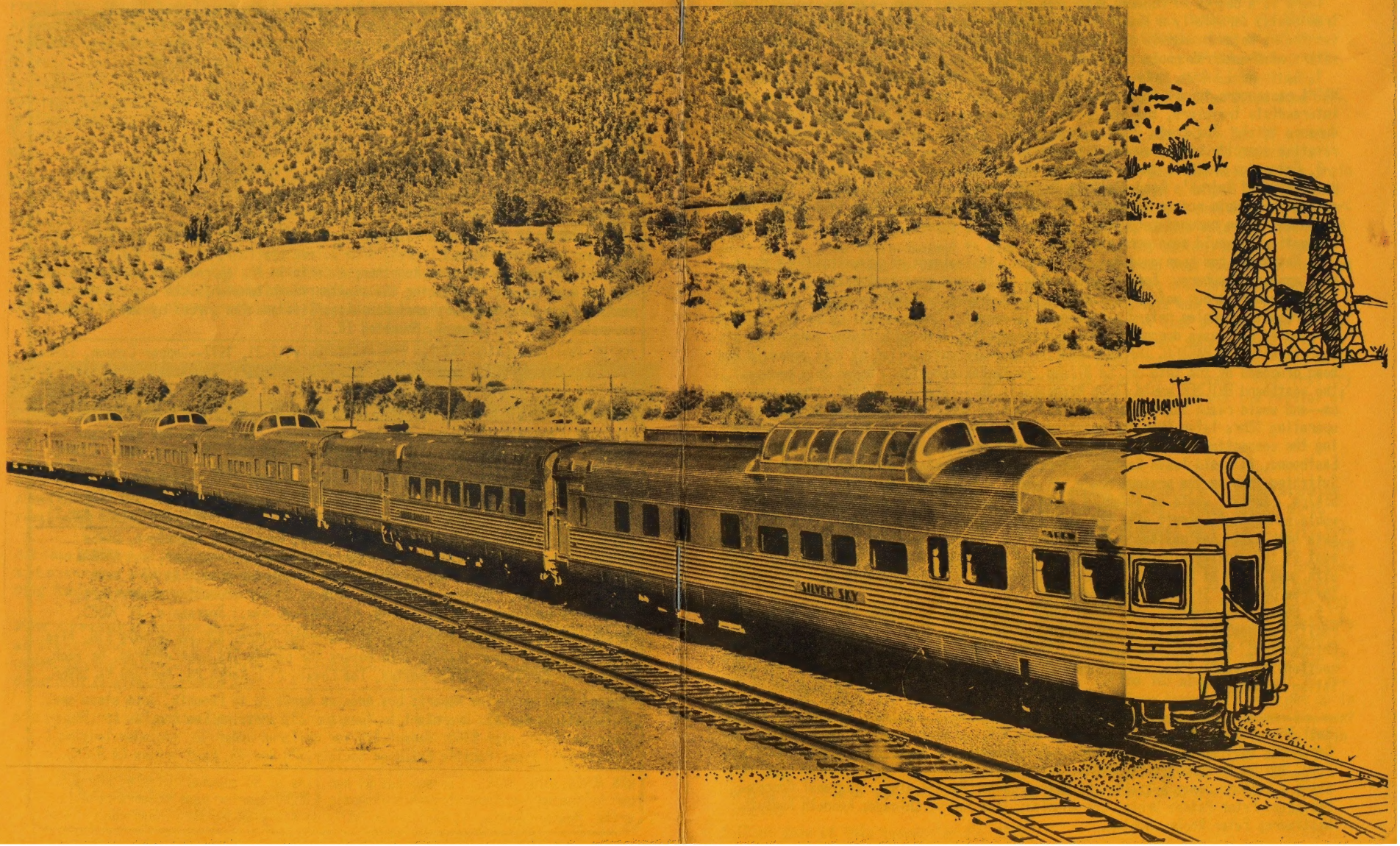

ON THE COVER:

The RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR, top-rated long distance train in RTN's fourth reader survey. If anyone doubts the numerical ratings, read the glowing reader comments in this issue. When Glenn Lee photographed the train at Glenwood Springs, Colorado, a little over a year ago, he was dismayed to find that his camera had inadvertently cut off the train's rounded tail, so artist friend Wayne Hom drew in the missing portion. Added at upper right is the Rio Grande's monument to the dome car, actually located elsewhere, and currently minus its model car, which is in storage to save it from vandals. Last two cars in photo are "Silver Banquet" and "Silver Sky."

LETTERS

There is a degree of concern with some of the recent discussion dealing with Amtrak costs, especially a letter (1st Feb issue) daring Amtrak to justify running two trains between Seattle and Chicago. This approach cannot help but muddy the waters of the Amtrak route structure readjustment issue.

1. As is well known, only a small percentage of EMPIRE BUILDER or NORTH COAST HIAWATHA passengers travel the entire distance between Seattle and Chicago. For these intermediate travelers, the air option is expensive and the bus option a great endurance trial. The train in these communities is much more important because of the relative scarcity of convenient alternative services.

2. Patronage on these trains is good--they consistently rank in the most highly productive of Amtrak's long-distance trains, and by no means can they be considered as "another train across Appalachia." Amtrak ran 18-car consists in summer, 1973; these have been reduced because of the shortage of diners, but larger consists almost automatically would mean more patronage.

3. Patronage has been good despite the fact that almost no advertising of these runs appears anywhere. Better advertising would mean more business.

4. A WashARP group met in Spokane Feb 26 to discuss possible schedule revisions. The present schedules retard patronage development. One proposal calls for a BUILDER running both ways overnight Chicago-Minneapolis, with both trains connecting at Everett with the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL. The overnight portion of this schedule had been proposed by the late Dr. Ed Ullman, an Amtrak director. Under this proposal, the westbound BUILDER would leave Minneapolis 9hrs later--at 8:45am rather than 11:45 pm--and would reach Spokane at 10:06am. Then it would switch to the Wenatchee route, operating 12hrs later than the existing NORTH COAST, reaching Seattle 7pm, and making the connection at Everett with the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL for British Columbia. Eastbound, it would leave Seattle 12½hrs later, at 9:45am, arriving Spokane 5:11pm. Switching then to the present route, it would operate 6hrs earlier, leaving Spokane 5:47pm. Arrival would be slightly faster in Minneapolis, about 11-11:30pm. It would connect at Everett with the southbound PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL. This schedule puts both east- and westbound trains thru the lightly-populated area of Montana just east of the Rockies midnight-6am, and gives Washington state an east-west day train with good times at Spokane. Connections are made with trains both ways at Chicago to/from Detroit, St. Louis & Carbondale.

5. Under this proposal, the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA would resume its former Northern Pacific schedule: lv Chicago about noon, ar Seattle 7:30pm; lv Seattle 2:30pm, ar Chicago 3pm. More spacious consists, better schedules, promotion, and better connections in Seattle, Everett, Minneapolis and Chicago can greatly improve the existing loadings.

(continued on page 18)

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STARLIGHT DERAILS, NARROWLY MISSES ANOTHER

The northbound COAST STARLIGHT derailed about a mile north of Corning CA just before midnight on Mar 8. Reports said that less than 2 hours before the wreck, a drunken auto driver had crashed into the tracks, apparently putting a kink in them. The Highway Patrol reported to the SP that the tracks appeared undamaged, and the SP did not examine them. However, when the STARLIGHT approached at 60mph, the train fireman said he saw a kink and alerted the engineer, who put the train into an emergency stop. Both SDP40F engines overturned, and 9 cars derailed, ending up in a zigzag pattern along the right-of-way. The last 2 cars, both sleepers, remained upright and underailed. The wreck occurred on a slight curve (less than one degree). About 26 people reported mostly minor injuries. Passengers were bused on to their destinations, and the southbound train was detoured via Chico and Roseville. The auto driver was later arrested for investigation of felony drunk driving. Among Amtrak cars damaged in the wreck was ex-SP dome lounge 9373, and as a result the forthcoming Amtrak 4449 steam excursion will mostly likely carry no dome car, since Amtrak lost a protection car for the advertised dome service on the STARLIGHT.

A second derailment of a STARLIGHT train was narrowly averted on Mar 13 as vandals turned a switch that would have sent the southbound train into a siding at the Sears Roebuck warehouse at Northridge CA. An RTN reader learned from his train radio that the train engineer radioed to Burbank tower that a signal 100 feet in front of him had just turned from green to red. The engineer went into a full service stop, and as the train was slowing he saw that the switch into the siding had been thrown. The train managed to stop just short of the siding, and the tower called railroad police to investigate. SP police reported that the switch lock had been smashed off with a hammer or rock, and the only thing that prevented Sears from having about 150 uninvited Amtrak passengers as guests was the fact that the switch was thrown just before train 11 reached the signal that protects the switch. Had the switch been thrown a few seconds later, a derailment surely would have occurred. The Los Angeles police and the FBI were investigating the case, said to be the third attempt this year to wreck an Amtrak train in the area. The first try was the placing of a large log in a switch frog, and the second was the removal of bolts from rail joints.

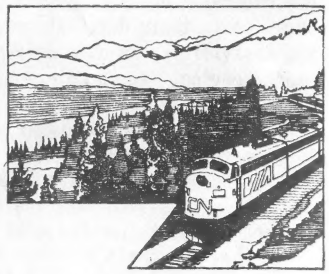
OLD MAN WINTER STRIKES AGAIN

A violent blizzard blew into the drought-stricken Central Plains state starting the night of Mar 10, lasting into the weekend of Mar 12-13. Winds gusted up to 100mph and snowdrifts to 35 feet deep gathered, and highways were closed while motorists were stranded and several people lost their lives. The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR was affected by the storm, as the train was held at some stations to avoid proceeding into the face of the storm. Train 5 that left Chicago Mar 10 was held at McCook, Nebraska the next morning, and it remained there for about 40 hours with 130 passengers living aboard it. Ten inches of snow were on the ground, and passengers reportedly left the train that served as their hotel to visit local restaurants. The consist eventually reached Denver on Mar 13. Train 5 that left Chicago Mar 11 was held at Lincoln, Nebraska the next morning. Of the 103 aboard, all but 10 decided to let Amtrak fly them to their destinations. Some passengers were put up in hotels in Lincoln. Train 6 that left Oakland on Mar 10 was held at Denver the next day, and 146 people were flown on and many were accommodated in hotels. The train was turned and became train 5 Denver-Oakland, reaching Oakland on time on Mar 13. A UP work train was marooned by the snow between Cheyenne Wells, CO and Sharon Springs KS. The UP was running no trains thru the storm area until the weather cleared.

Mailing date of this issue: Mar 25, 1977

Rail Canada

A MEDIA BLITZ appears underway in Canada concerning the coming formation of VIA RAIL CANADA, the crown corporation that will take over responsibility for passenger train operation. The media push, similar to those seen recently in the U.S. to try to sway public opinion pro or con on important public policy issues, generally paints a negative picture of the new corporation's prospects and makes unflattering comments about Amtrak, after which the new corporation is patterned. The Financial Times Service, predictably enough, in a widely-syndicated article said: "If the U.S. experience is any guide, Canadians can expect their new national rail passenger service... to improve travel for the minority who go by rail, but to do so with heavier subsidies and growing expense to the majority of taxpayers." The article, published last month, speaks of "huge subsidies" to Amtrak (there is no comparison made with subsidies to other modes) and remarks that "Growth in passenger traffic has consistently fallen below Amtrak's estimates. And operating losses have been huge." In a series of articles distributed around the country by the Southam News Services, and written by Orland French, a parliamentary correspondent for the Ottawa Citizen, the idea is posed that Amtrak is a bumbling, expensive failure and that enormous subsidies await the Canadian people for rescuing rail passenger service. The articles are replete with technical errors and apparent misquotations (trains have "plexiglass" windows, Japanese trains run on "overhead monorails", an Amtrak official is quoted as saying "People would be crazy to travel across the country by rail. We're aiming at the people who drive their cars, or take the plane, for up to 300 miles"). This reporter, evidently a rail neophyte, seems to have concentrated on riding Amtrak's disadvantaged trains, such as the MONTREALER and INTER-AMERICAN, and offers generally a negative, if sloppily-done, report.



VIA RAIL CANADA will be phased in gradually, not introduced suddenly as Amtrak was. Transport Minister Otto Lang has indicated that he hopes to see the corporation fully operational within two years. Lang told reporters in Vancouver that "This company will be more realistic than Amtrak in the U.S. Statistics show that a much higher percentage of Canadians use rail travel than Americans."

URBAN TRANSIT MONEY from the federal government will not be forthcoming, Transport Minister Otto Lang told the Commons on Feb 23, backing down on his party's 1974 campaign pledge. He indicated that the limits of federal financing of urban transit are $100 million over 5 years for new commuter equipment, and that beyond that expenditure provinces and municipal governments would have to take the responsibility.

ALASKA WOULD BENEFIT from a new rail link between the Alaska Railroad and the British Columbia Railway at Dease Lake, according to a recently-released U.S. government report.

THE POSITION OF Chairman of CN might go to Paul Gerin-Lajoie, former head of the Canadian International Development Agency, Transport Minister Lang has indicated.

CARS & CONSISTS

*NATIONAL LIMITED, train 30, Kansas City Mar 2: engines 437 (E8A), 627 (SDP, off at St. Louis), 430 (E9A, on at St. Louis), ConRail 6328 (SD40, on as lead engine at Indianapolis), 4933 (GG-1, replaced other units at Harrisburg; cars 7259 (buffer car), 1180, 1161, 2625 "Pacific Peak" (thru car), 2689, 8342, 5442, 5425, 5254 to DC, 1710 deadhead St. Louis-Indianapolis. Train 430, Harrisburg Mar 3: engine 928 (GG-1); car 5254. Train 431, Washington Mar 4: engine 928 (GG-1); cars 5432, 1166,

1024. Train 30, St. Louis Mar 1: engine 596; cars 2292 (buffer car), 1187, 1188, 2605 "Pacific Castle", 3224, 8060, 5649, 5423.

*INTER-AMERICAN, train 21, St. Louis Mar 1: engines 612, 367; cars 6067 (buffer car), 1098, 1412, 2637 "Pacific Terrace", 8151, 5804, 5606, 5801, 5803. Train 22, same (ar St. Louis 3:20 late): engines 624, 595; cars 4750 (buffer car), 1156, 1600, 2802, 8320, 6026, 6088, 3392. Same, St. Louis-Chic (makeup train?): engine 594; cars 4842 (buffer car), 4807, 4471, 6016, 5640, 8082, 2559.

*ABRAHAM LINCOLN, train 303, St. Louis Mar 4: engine 599; cars 6010, 6018, 6050, 6023, 6044, 8354, dome-parlor-obs 9320 "Silver Terrace". (Train using conventional equipment until further notice. Car 9320 later bad-ordered, replaced by 9201 "Starlight Dome", running backwards in consist.)

*BLACK HAWK, train 370, Rockford IL Mar 2: engine 408 (E9A); 6064, 3820, 6001. Train 372 Mar 5: engine 527 (new paint); cars 8324, hi-levels 9926, 9952, 9942, 9956 (2 cars reserved for Ice Capades tour Mar 5-6). Train 371 Mar 18: engine 533 (new paint); cars 9936, 9926 (hi-levels), 3342 lounge-obs with PANAMA LTD drumhead.

*ADIRONDACK, train 68, Mar 1 (last run with conventional equipment): engines D&H 18, D&H 19 (PA's); D&H coach 1012, Atk dome coach 9562, D&H diner-lounge "Adirondack Lodge", D&H coach 34, D&H coach "Schroon Lake", D&H coach "Essex County", D&H coach "Lake George."

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11, Seattle Mar 12: engines BN 6319 (SD40-2), Atk 334 (E8 in striped paint), SR 6147 (FP-7); cars 2550 "Air Force Academy" (buffer car), 1501, & 12 more cars including dome 9372 and 7 coaches. Train 14, Oakland Mar 22: engines 572, 569; cars 2252 "Star Leaf" (buffer car), 1161, 1503, 4494, 4531, 8102, 4535, 4886, 4506, 4855, 4869, 4861, 4539, dome 9371, 8075, 2658 "Silver Dale", 2631 "Pacific Scene", (deadhead to Seattle:) 2266 "Placid Sea."

*SILVER METEOR, train 84, Miami Feb 27: engines 645, 548; cars 1408, 4427, 5424, 4562, 4561, 8013, 3310, 4578, 4466, 4409, 4457, 2023 "Silver Repose", 8334, 3222 "Palm Beach", 2695, 2303 "Jay Bird", 2632 "Pacific Shore", 10,000 inspection car.

*SILVER STAR, train 81, Washington Mar 4: engines 645, 548; cars 5667 (buffer), 1163, 1427, 2696, 5457, 4564, 4454, 4459, 3343, 8022, (St. Pete section:) 8302, 4430, 4457, 4409, 5463, 2689.

*SUNSET LIMITED, train 1, El Paso Mar 5: engines 555, 572; cars 2532 "Gull" (buffer), 1004, 9934, 9955, 9910, 3393, 8041, 2713 "Pine Cavern", 2351 "Regal Inn", 2216 "Indian Mesa", 2683 (thru car), (on at El Paso:) Pac. RR Society cars "Timothy B. Blackstone", "National Forum", Imperial Bird", "Starlight Cafe", (Great Western Tours car:) "Minneapolis Club." (Dome observations no longer on SUNSET due to SP complaints of "clearance" problems in Louisiana.)

Urban-Suburban Transit

THE LEGAL BATTLE to save Grand Central Station from destruction--owner Penn Central wants to build a high-rise office building there--got some publicity this month when Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Mayor Abraham Beame and other celebrities held a press conference at the station and called for its preservation. The NY Court of Appeals will hear the case this spring.

THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT of Transportation this month expressed its willingness to negotiate with the SP for purchase of its commuter service (not including hardware) on the San Francisco peninsula. PENTAP recommended that the state legislature direct the SP to begin such negotiations (see RTN, 1st Nov issue, 1976).

TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY ADAMS told reporters this month that the nation can no longer afford to depend on the automobile to move poeple into and out of the inner cities: "We had an excellent urban transit system in this country during the 1920s --streetcar, railroads--and we gave it up." Adams said auto use would stabilize rather than decline during the next decade. He said that mass transit should be considered not as a service to commerce but as part of urban development--a public service needed to restore life to our cities. (contd. on page 8)

WHAT THE READERS FOUND ABOARD

SOME COMMENTS ON TOP- AND BOTTOM-RATED TRAINS FROM OUR RECENT READER TRAIN RATING SURVEY. FOR NUMERICAL RATINGS, SEE FIRST FEBRUARY ISSUE.

RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR

"The finest train we have ever had the pleasure of riding--scenery, food, service and crew all superb! Only drawbacks are scheduling--no thru connection with other lines or to Ogden" (Bill Mace, Culver City CA).

"Could be the finest train in the nation. From mountains to desert, the scenery is incredible. There's no better place to view scenery than from a dome" (Bud McMahon, Sonoma CA).

"The best dining car and dining car crew I've ever seen--they couldn't be this good all the time" (Amtrak employee).

"Has to be the best train ride in America. Load disappointingly only 15 west of Grand Junction. Station in Salt Lake is poor, with only a few lights on at 9:30pm arrival" (C. E. McGinnis, Portland OR).

"The finest passenger train in North America. Fantastic scenery. Domes are super. Food in diner superb. Sold out on this date. Need daily service in summer and thru cars to Chicago, but does not need Amtrak management, as Rio Grande is doing that fine" (Thomas Coval, Holland PA).

"Still the finest train ride in the country. It's a crime that the connections are so poor. Even with mainly local people and railfans riding, there was a load of about 200. Still the best diner and crew anywhere. The menu is still nearly as good and varied as on the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, by actual comparison with a 1968 CZ menu. It appeared that almost everyone on the train ate three meals in the diner. It gets to be a hard choice between the tremendous scenery from a dome, or superlative food and service in the diner. West of Grand Junction the passenger load is probably half of that to the east. For the greatest enjoyment of the diner, this makes the westbound trip the best. However, the most scenic enjoyment is eastbound because of the descent down the mountains at dusk into Denver, with an hour of breathtaking views of the cities from the mountain tops" (Robert Clark, Florida).

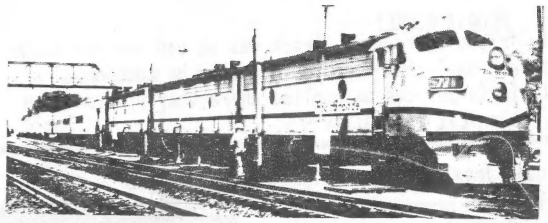
"Perfect in every respect. The food was the best overall I have had in years, and the Rocky Mountain trout was superb. On-board services in the dining and lounge cars were fantastic... This was the first train I have taken that I could not find one fault in, since the SUPER CHIEF went off to the happy hunting grounds" (Garl B. Latham, Garland TX).

"Scenery unsurpassed. Diner crews and food like in CZ days. Steward knows his job of supervising diner here. Western Division train crews are tight about vestibule riding, but Eastern Division crews (where all the great scenery is) just ignore you there. One picture I have shows a railfan in each of the 5 vestibules ahead of mine! F-9's failing fast--had extra freight units on 4 out of 6 trains seen. When units operate correctly, train runs early at most stops. Lexan is present but almost rare. Cosmetically and mechanically, cars not quite up to par with Western Amtrak's, but the domes, food, scenery, and service make up for this! Stations seem adequate. Food is TERRIFIC. As we sat in Bond, Colorado, eating a tasty lunch, our waiter told us they were loading trout caught in the Colorado River that morning for dinner that night!" (Alan Miller, Palo Alto CA).

"Dining car had a full crew which was the best I had been served by in 4 years. Food excellent. Very good trip" (Charles V. Fattu, Page AZ).

NIAGARA RAINBOW

"My trip (I hope!) cannot be considered typical. The conductor in Detroit told people to ignore seat reservations, tried vainly to keep from opening up all the cars to passengers despite a heavy load, and vigorously chewed out people who did not have their seat checks in their possession at all times (even in the washroom!).



The D&RGW's RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR is refueled at Grand Junction CO last Aug 20. From Kodachrome by Larry Anglund.

After every stop all passengers were asked to show seat checks. The train had no diner, only a snack bar which was closed 2 hours before Buffalo "to add the diner." Then the diner was added, but was unusable because of lack of silverware. The train was nearly 2 hours late into NY, and no Amtrak staff was on duty in Grand Central to assist with missed connections. I barely made the last Clocker to Philadelphia; a less-knowledgable passenger would have missed it" (Duane Roller, Waterloo).

"The Rochester station is an utter disgrace. Members of our group were shocked when they saw the condition it was in (Ed. note: demolition of the station is now beginning). There should be a full diner instead of the diner-lounge. It makes for long waits for meals. In addition, some system should be used so people would be taken in their turn instead of the haphazard system now used, where passengers are taken at random with no concern for the length of time they were waiting. The air conditioning in our coach went out early and it required that we change coaches several times, as no sooner would we settle down in a new coach than the air conditioning would go out on that one too" (Allan H. Toub, Madison NJ).

"Cars dumpier than ever, but remarkable improvement in crew attitudes. Minor ticket problem (my fault) corrected without scowls. Servants in diner only moderately obedient, but most friendly" (Michael Leighton, Mt. Kisco NY).

"Coach attendant found little to do, baggage-laden passengers notwithstanding. Dining car 'doesn't open till we leave Buffalo.' Scheduled departure is 1pm; train ran 44mins late. Nor could passengers eat supper before Utica, which was reached at 5:45pm. Diabetic passenger who requires uniform meal schedule served lunch under protest and supper not at all. Crew sat in diner doing nothing prior to serving time" (Indiana reader).

SAN DIEGANS

"The Amfleet SAN DIEGANS are really a sharp operation. Passengers and crew alike enjoy the new equipment, trackage is good, scenery terrific, scheduling excellent. If Amtrak can run their other corridors at this standard, I think they can make significant inroads into the highway market" (Chris Cameron, Hawaii Nat. Park HI).

"Overall the SAN DIEGANS are in great shape. You still have to wait too long in the food car for inferior sandwiches. I would pay more for better food. Track conditions appear poor on both sides of San Juan Capistrano, as our train first paused on a siding for the eastbound SAN DIEGAN and then belatedly crept nearly to the Mission Viejo undercrossing of I-5 before resuming reasonable running speed, making the train a half-hour late on a one-hour trip from Oceanside to Santa Ana. Amtrak still lags far behind the airlines in informing passengers of the reasons for delays" (C. Schiermeyer, Long Beach CA).

"Riding qualities of Amfleet cars are very good. The only drawback I notice is the small window size. It would have been nice to view the ocean from larger windows. Both the non-food and food crew were very helpful and cordial. However, there was only one person on duty in the snack car during the lunch hour. He sure could have used some help. I would rate the food very poor, based on the hamburgers alone. Overall, a very enjoyable trip" (R. David Sievert, Hacienda Hts CA).

"Ride smooth and seats very comfortable. Baggage racks too low and windows too small. The fold-down tables make the Amcafe snacks delightful on this short-distance trip" (Robert P. Abraham, McKeesport PA).

"Need far more trains to serve this area properly" (A.J. Newett, Carrollton TX).

PEORIA ROCKET

"Train crew was exceptionally friendly; however, track was so bad and patronage so low (less than 8 passengers each way) that this train should be abandoned so resources of Rock Island and Illinois DOT can be applied where they will do some good" (Walter E. Rittle, Naperville IL).

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT (continued from page 5)

THREE OREGON LEGISLATORS this month proposed a study to determine whether a rapid rail service would work in the Willamette Valley, Portland-Eugene.

ROHR INDUSTRIES INC. this month filed a claim with the Washington Metro system for $48.3 million beyond the original price of $93.4 million for construction of 300 rapid transit cars. Rohr said that design changes made by Metro required the higher costs.

A MAJOR ARTICLE on mass transit appeared on the Wall Street Journal's front page Mar 1. The article indicated that public transit ridership is on the increase everywhere with the exception of New York City. Nationwide, ridership rose 8% from 1972 to 1976, but the real trends are masked by the fact that New York covers 25% of the nationwide total. In NYC, ridership dropped 11%, while it rose 17% in the rest of the U.S. Author Albert Karr pointed out that money earmarked for NY improvements hasn't had a chance to make itself felt there yet.

OVER $1.5 BILLION in Federal-aid highway funds are available to finance many traffic and transit improvements in the U.S., Secretary Brock Adams announced Mar 18. He said that use of them could have a substantial impact on jobs. The funds are set aside for the Urban System Program, and may be used for highways of local importance and transit facilities in urban areas over 5000 population. Of the $3 billion authorized by Congress, over half remained unobligated as of Jan 31.

ANOTHER CHICAGO ACCIDENT occurred Mar 16 when a CTA bus was hit by a Rock Island switch engine on the South Side, with 14 persons injured, none critically.

U.S. HIGHWAY TRAVEL in 1976 amounted to 1,390 billion vehicle miles--an increase of 4.5% over 1975, and 8.1% over 1974. California had the highest mileage, with 10% of the national total. The Federal Highway Adminstration announced the preliminary figures early this month.

RAIL FANTRIPS

May 6-8 Oak Island-Buffalo & return in consist of D&H Apollo & Mercury trains. Lowers, uppers, rmts, bdrms; no coaches. Info: George A. Pins, 350 Fifth Ave., Suite 6104, New York, NY 10001.

Private car "Minneapolis Club" Oakland-Sparks Apr 16-17, $65 not incl. motel. Limit 20 people. Calif. RR Enthusiasts c/o B.L. Jennison, 1555 Oxford #101, Berkeley CA 94709. (415) 841-9468.

Steam & diesel excursions as part of NRHS nat'l convention Aug 31-Sep 5. Info from Roanoke Chap., NRHS, Box 13222, Roanoke VA 24032.

Private Car #50 (1904 Pullman) for rent for non-excursion purposes. Excursions & your own trips out of Wash. DC--write: Rail Travel Ass'n, Walter Loftin Jr., PO Box 62, Alexandria VA 22313. (703) 524-0844.

Apr 27: STARLIGHT Oakland-Salinas, 4449 Salinas-Oakland. 100-seat limit, $24. Bay Area Elec. RR Ass'n, Box 3694, San Francisco CA 94119. (415) 673-6547.

RTN's Rail Fantrips Dept. will appear every issue while demand is heavy. One special-event listing is free, subject to our editing. Send full info to: Rail Travel News, Fantrips Dept., Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

VIA RAIL CANADA - REPLAY OF 1971?

by Robert Rynerson

On the last day of February, Canada's Transport Minister Otto Lang dropped the other shoe and expounded to the Canadian public on the future of Canadian rail passenger service. A speech in Vancouver, B.C. received wide national coverage, often followed by the kind of uninformed commentary that Americans have grown to expect regarding Amtrak.

The catchwords were all as old hat as a Pennsy calendar picture to students of U.S. rail politics. Money would be saved by eliminating "duplication." Modern "marketing" would be introduced. Sleek "new trains" would be purchased. "Essential" service to isolated communities would be considered. Cost to the government would be "cut in half" over present deficits. For a moment I imagined that Lang was not really making the statements--that the television people were replaying an old tape from the Nixon administration regarding Railpax 1971. Lang was just mouthing the pre-recorded statement.

There are to be some Canadian differences. Apparently the changeover will be gradual, rather than dramatic. This became apparent as a new logo, timetables, and repainted equipment began to emerge some time ago. Lang said that VIA Rail Canada would first begin its work in Canada's equivalent of the Northeast Corridor, the Quebec City-Ottawa-Montreal-Toronto-Windsor region.

This regional orientation is important. Of course, it appears to be a carbon copy of the Northeast slant of Amtrak's originators, but there is an extra reason for the glow of this concept north of the Great Lakes. Under the parliamentary system of government as it has recently operated in Canada, the role of strong individuals in the minority party in the legislative branch of government is not as significant as it is in, say, the U.S. Senate. This can leave the executive portion of the government with a freer hand to carry out programs. This has both comparative advantages and disadvantages. The problem for the future of rail passenger service is that currently the Liberal party, which controls the government, is practically non-existent in some parts of the West. Its great strength has been in Ontario and Quebec, with enough support scattered thru the rest of the country to give it a majority. Given the natural tendency to reward one's constituents, the Northeast Corridor concept has a lot of charm to a government looking for ideas to borrow.

Once one sees the regional bias of the national government, several other of the old Railpax 1971 catchwords become clear. For example, "duplication" really looks like the situation on the transcontinental routes if you are sitting in Ottawa, thru which both CP and CN pass. But if you are sitting in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta, a metropolitan city and the largest city in the province, you are 200 miles away from the CP main line. Currently, there is an RDC connecting service, but VIA did not choose to bother showing this in its national condensed timetable, tho a tri-weekly branch line service in Quebec was included in that folder.

Eliminating duplication under Amtrak in 1971 meant cutting off all four east-west schedules from Portland, Oregon while retaining two of four east-west schedules from politically powerful Seattle. Eliminating duplication in Canada means the same sort of thing, because in fact there is little real duplication left to cut.

(continued on page 12)

PHOTO GALLERY

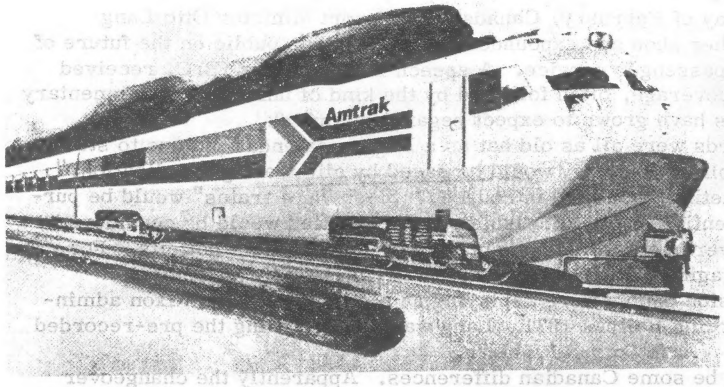
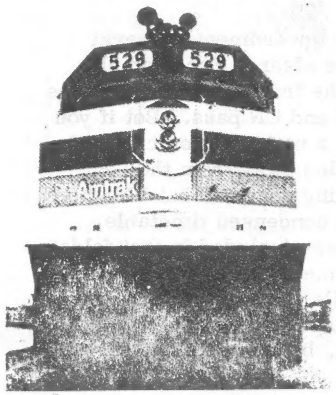


PHOTO GALLERY

(Above:) The Canadian LRC trains to be leased by Amtrak for trial on Pacific Northwest routes might look like this Amtrak drawing, altho Amtrak said that the paint scheme has not yet been finalized.

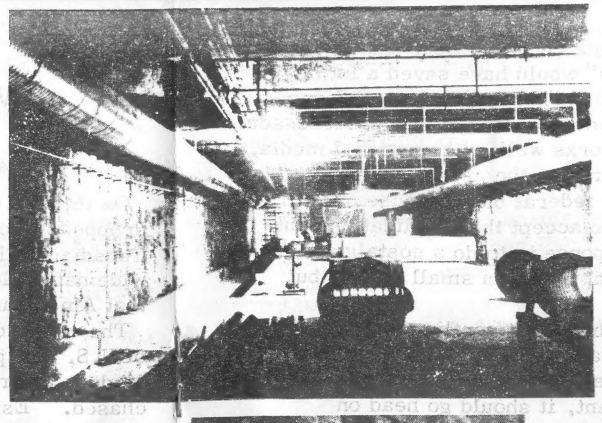
(Right:) Passengers and welcoming crowds mingle at the Superior, Wisconsin, stop of the newly-rescheduled ARROWHEAD, at the Feb 15 inaugural run. Photo by Howard Davy. See Mr. Davy's article in our last issue.

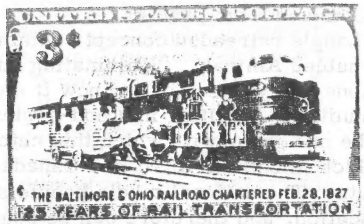
(Below:) This Amtrak photo (from Amtrak's new tour booklet, "Amtrak presents the rediscovery of America") shows a variation of the corporation's new color scheme for SDP40F locomotives, on engine 529. Compare the cover photo of RTN, 2nd Sept issue, 1976.



WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE: In drought-stricken Northern California, the outbound SAN JOAQUIN, Amtrak train 710 in Amfleet livery, speeds past Berkeley's watery Aquatic Park on an--alas--bright and clear Feb 27 morning. The Bay and San Francisco are in the mists in the background of this scene resplendent in water, pretty but unpotable. RTN photo at right.

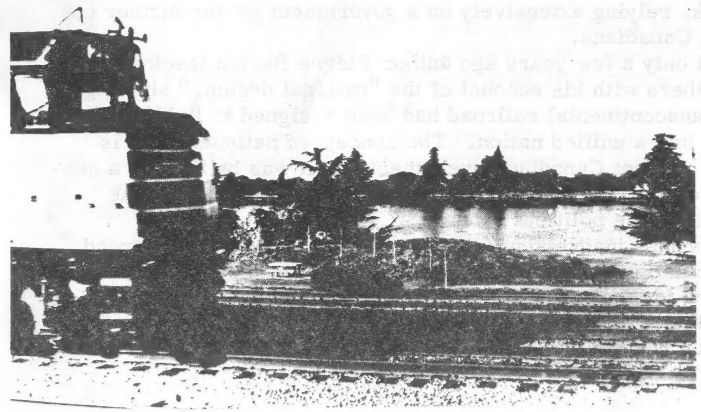
THE MILWAUKEE ROAD has produced some "in-house" schedules for the EMPIRE BUILDER & NORTH COAST HIAWATHA on the railroad's section of the route. The BUILDER is to lv Minneapolis about 11am, & eastbound NCH runs about 4pm for Chicago. Westbound runs are also late, with the BUILDER often arriving Minneapolis about 1:30-2am. Seattle arrivals continue to be 3-5pm many days.





125 years of rail transportation in the U.S. were acknowledged by a postage stamp issued in 1952 (above). On this Feb 28, in 1977, the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, no such stamp appeared. Instead, a special Amtrak train from Washington brought industry celebrants to the B&O Museum in Baltimore for a commemorative dinner. Founding of the railroad in 1827 marked the beginning of railroading in the U.S.

(Photos at left:) Interior finishing was underway on Jan 4 at Central Station (101st St. & Jasper Ave.) under the heart of Edmonton, Alberta. This will be the initial western terminal of the subway/surface rapid transit line under construction now. In another year, passengers may be boarding trains here. This station uses an island platform. Trains will use a crossover east of the station to change direction (upper photo). A view towards the east in the westbound tunnel appears in the lower photo. The segment of line beneath downtown buildings is in separate tubes, each dug by a "mole" tunneling device that will be used by the city's Water and Sanitation Branch until needed for future subway extensions. Edmonton's rapid transit system will be a railfan's delight, as the surface portion, including three stations, is on the CN right-of-way used by the transcontinental trains and three RDC local trains. The outer end of the line crosses the CN main freight and passenger route, offering photo opportunities plus. (photos by R.W. Rynerson.)



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(continued from page 9)

Lang's retreaded concept contains the same contradictions that have troubled Amtrak. "Eliminating duplication" would have saved a lot of money 20 years ago, but now it means cutting off fairly substantial communities, resulting in a non-system with worse costs than its predecessor. The one group with which this catchword works well is the national media, which in both the U.S. and Canada is centered in the area least affected by cuts. The national media people share the federal bias because of their location, and therefore can be counted on to accept the "duplication" cutbacks uncritically. Their predictable response is to do a nostalgia piece about how the trains used to be so important to life in small towns, but now progress has come along, etc....

This leads to the "essential" service problem. It conflicts directly with the "profitability" goal in some cases. Again parroting Railpax 1971, Lang assured us that the availability of alternate air or bus service would be considered. If VIA is to be most efficient, it should go head on against all other modes on certain routes and beat the daylights out of them with rate wars, predatory scheduling, and so forth. If it is to provide "essential" services, it will continue some of Canada's intriguing runs to remote areas. The fact is, however, that air and bus service can always be found to justify taking off a train. The problem is that these alternate services may be (a) inferior, and (b) operating on a different or awkward route. This is most notable in the case of the CN transcontinental line, points on which are mostly served by branch line bus services, requiring changes and awkward layovers. The fuel for the conflict is the historic fact that towns in the West of both the U.S. and Canada were built on multiple rail lines. Service on one line anywhere will always miss some towns. In the West, major cities will be omitted. Only communities with political pull will find that they are "essential."

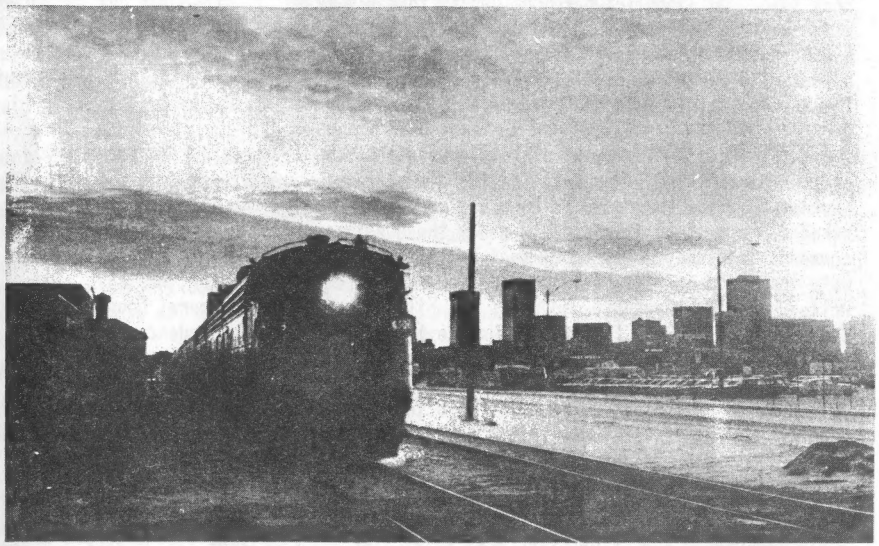
"Tough luck," people would say about a town that was bypassed by transportation changes. Unfortunately, this is not a satisfactory answer when the changes are dictated by a central government which long ago suspended any free competition in transport thru a marketplace rigged with aid to other modes, coupled with a subsidy program which encouraged CN and CP to sit on their hands. (CP Rail was not even listed in the 1976 Edmonton yellow pages, despite its passenger service.)

Adopting a rail passenger program that so clearly favors one region will only aggravate the growth of separatist movements, regionalism, sectionalism, and a general centrifugal feeling, at a critical time in Canadian history. The reliance on air travel, which stresses point-to-point travel without contact with the people and regions between, has already divorced Canadian decision-makers from their land. In that respect, Otto Lang is ahead of the pack, relying extensively on a government jet for further cut himself off from Canadians.

It is ironic that only a few years ago author Pierre Berton fascinated Canadians and others with his account of the "national dream," showing how Canada's transcontinental railroad had been designed to link far-flung British colonies into a unified nation. The concept of national unity is promoted by the current Canadian government, as it was by the one a century ago when the railroad was planned. Actions, however, do speak louder than words in the political sphere.

Mr. Lang is perhaps inadvertently helping to push along another trend that is most fascinating to Americans. For reasons based both on national pride and concern for their economy, Canadians have become preoccupied with the degree that U.S. corporations control their economy. Sometimes this preoccupation results in what seem to be silly concerns about such

things as spelling, but as with other movements in society, the government claims to be concerned and trying to do something about it. But now that the stage has been set, look at who benefits from the removal by the federal government of rail passenger service in the West. Greyhound Lines of Canada, a subsidiary of the U.S. corporation, controls all of the long-haul bus lines there. There is no Canadian version of Trailways. There are some strong regional carriers, some owned by provincial governments. While the airlines are Canadian-owned (Air Canada by the federal government, CP Air by Canadian Pacific), they must purchase most of their aircraft from the same American manufacturers whose illegal campaign



Rails tie the Western provinces to the rest of Canada. Canadian National's SUPER CONTINENTAL, train no. 1, leaves Edmonton, Alberta, on a Feb 1977 morning as the sun rises over the prairie metropolis. View of skyline from 116th Street crossing. Photo by Robert Rynerson.

contributions helped shape federal policy in the U.S. Air routes also show a strong orientation toward the U.S., in contrast to the rail network. The highway mode of travel is dominated by Canadian subsidiaries of U.S. companies. In contrast, in 1973 figures, less than 2% of Canada's railroad system was controlled by foreign companies, and most of that consisted of logically U.S.-operated connecting links, plus the Buffalo-Detroit "bridge" routes.

The government which preaches control of Canada's economy by Canadians is now preparing to curtail the last remnants of Canada's "national dream" and to leave the travel market to the branch plant managers. It is an amazing thing for a U.S. citizen to watch.

The intentions of people who set a new direction in public policy are often thwarted by events or new interpretations of their philosophy. The subsequent course of Amtrak has shown that. In fairness to the current Canadian government, it apparently has tried to avoid some of the rough startup problems experienced by Amtrak. Ironically, this has been rumored to include the hiring of consultants from the U.S.

The future course of VIA Rail Canada will depend on the willingness of Canadians to support rail passenger service politically, as well as economically. At the moment, however, I keep thinking that the next page I flip in the VIA condensed timetable will read "Made in U.S.A., copyright 1971."

Mixed Train of Thoughts

SPRING TIMETABLE CHANGES coming up Apr 24 with the start of Daylight Saving Time will include a number of alterations, none of them major, according to an Amtrak spokesman, and none finalized as of this date (Mar 23). Under active consideration, Amtrak said, is a plan to reschedule the BROADWAY LIMITED so it leaves Chicago at about 8pm and arrives NY about 3pm; leaves NY 2 or 2:30pm and arrives Chicago at 8am. A rumor going the rounds that Amtrak will re-route the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR over UP tracks between Omaha and Denver is no more than a rumor, Amtrak said. An unconfirmed report has it that slower, 10-hr schedules due to bad track will be introduced on the Chicago-Minneapolis route..... ANOTHER UNCONFIRMED REPORT holds that ConRail will petition to abandon 23 miles of track between Cambridge City OH and Charlottesville IN (USRA line #633), requiring Amtrak to re-route the NATIONAL LIMITED on the Dayton-Indianapolis portion of its route.....

* * *

THE MOUNTAINEER TRAIN may be discontinued soon. The 2-year experimental period expires Mar 25, and Transportation Secretary Adams, who must make the decision whether to allow the route to become a permanent part of the Amtrak system, has asked for a month's extension to study the question. The DOT will take written comments from the public (they must be received before Apr 7) on whether to terminate the train or include it in the system (see Federal Register, Mar 21). To write regarding the train, address: OST File #52, Office of General Counsel, DOT, Washington DC 20590. Include the Notice #77-9 in your correspondence. One wag pointed out to us recently that the state motto of West Virginia translates as: "Mountaineers are always free". If the DOT decides to terminate it, Amtrak could retain it by action of its Board of Directors working with route selection criteria..

AMTRAK'S STEAM EXCURSION with the 4449 engine (see details last issue) is selling out very rapidly. Heaviest sales to date are in the Western portion of the run, with L.A.-San Luis Obispo and Eugene-Portland virtually sold out. The train will have a capacity of about 830, including a 29-seat parlor car (29 seats and one train-headquarters drawing room) from which over 400 people have been turned away on various legs of the transcon trip. The parlor car is to be an ex-CONGRESSIONAL car. Amtrak hopes to have at least one photo stop daily, if the schedule permits...

* * *

ISN'T IT LIKELY that Canada's new VIA color scheme was inspired by the Netherlands train scheme shown on our last cover? Take the three slanted blue stripes on the NS train and add one vertical bar at each end, and lo and behold you have the VIA logo. Train colors are similar--just add a "CN" logo on the engine nose.....

AMTRAK WILL RUN a test train to test the SDP40F engines as follows: Mar 22: Chicago-Minneapolis station via Milwaukee Road; Mar 23-24: layover in Minneapolis; Mar 25: Minn.-Minot; Mar 26: Minot-Havre; Mar 27: layover in Havre; Mar 28: Havre-Spokane; Mar 29: Spokane-Seattle via NP route; Mar 30-31: layover, review tests; Apr 1: Seattle-Spokane via NP; Apr 2: Spokane-Havre; Apr 3: layover; Apr 4: Havre-Minot; Apr 5: Minot-Minneapolis; Apr 6-10: layover, evaluate results; Apr 12-15: lv Minneapolis for Seattle on same daily cycle as above; Apr 18: return to Minneapolis on same daily cycle as above. The test train will operate only during daylight hours, and will make 2-3 trips thru some curves at incrementally higher speeds. Consist to be used: SDP40F engines 586 & 620; baggage car 1025 with special instrumentation; EMD test car ET800; AAR test car 100; (to be added at Minneapolis:) BN business car "Kootenay River", BN bus. car "Red River", BN B-9 track measuring car, BN 227 baggage car, and 3 Amtrak coaches. An F40PH engine may be added later..... THE PANAMA LIMITED, train 59, on Mar 5 was 6hrs 25mins late leaving Memphis after generator repairs. The train had generator failure into Memphis, and thus no heat nor lights. New Orleans and most intermediate passengers

transferred to Greyhound at Memphis, since the train was to be detoured over the ICG's Tallahatchie District because of a bridge washout near Durant MS, and it would be delayed more. Train 58 that day also made the detour. Consist of train 59 was engine 707, cars 21207, 21821, 20226, 21204, 21202, 1377, & dome sleeper 9224. On Mar 8 four persons were killed in a collision between their car and train 59 at an ICG grade crossing 2 miles north of Thomasboro IL. All were stationed at Chanute Air Force Base, Rantoul IL. There were no injuries on the train. Two hours later a car hit ICG piggyback train 51 at the same place, with no injuries..... THE ELECTRIC AUTOMOBILE: it may be the vehicle of the future, says Transportation Sec'y Adams. His predictions look very much like those we made in the First Jan issue, tho he was discussing urban travel and not long-distance. The DOT is conducting a study of some issues that affect electric cars, at the request of the Energy Research & Development Administration--such as whether traffic laws, taxes, regulations and other factors may hinder the car's development. Adams said he will drive an electric car himself as a test over a long time period. "We must look to the ultimate exhaustion of the oil supplies that keep the transportation running" Adams told reporters in mid-March. President Carter is to unveil the long-awaited national energy policy on Apr 20. Carter said the plan will cost him some of his popularity, but is necessary. Thus far the major aspect of the plan that has been discussed is the substitution of coal for some petroleum- and natural gas-fired generating plants. A gasoline tax has been mentioned, but Carter said it wouldn't be as high as the 25¢/gallon figure rumored. Meanwhile, the Arab oil nations are buying solar-electric generators for their own use.....

* * *

AMTRAK HAS ISSUED what is evidently the most elaborate and expensive tours booklet yet. Entitled "Amtrak presents the re-discovery of America," the 76-page, 4-color, large-format booklet gives details of many tours ranging in price from $7.50 to $2,733. The book is available from Amtrak travel agents or by writing: Amtrak Travel Center, PO Box 311, Addison IL 60101..... AN AMTRAK SURVEY finds that 59.5% of its passengers are female. Over 5000 riders were included in the survey..... "AX THE ARMREST!" shouts NARP in its Jan bulletin, and we agree wholeheartedly. Those fixed armrests between Amfleet seats are bad, but the prospect of having to put up with them on long-distance bi-level trains is worse.

No armrest at all would be preferable to one that makes for maximum inflexibility in seating, preventing a child from lying across parents' laps, etc. NARP points out that the competition has no such constraints: "the back seat of an automobile; any intercity bus; even an uncrowded night flight, where the stewardess will remove the armrests so that you can lie down." NARP said the dreaded implements appeared in mockups of bi-level cars at the Pullman-Standard factory.....

* * *

A U.S. COURT last month decided against Amtrak in the case in which the rail corporation wanted Penn Central to repair its track on the FLORIDIAN route to return it to 1971 standards. The decision was influenced by the PC's bankruptcy and the transfer of the line to ConRail ownership. And the ICC was asked last month by the UP and 13 other railroads to decide whether Amtrak must pay the railroads for costs of maintenance-of-way..... WESTERN CORRIDOR TRAINS continued to register ridership gains in January, reports Amtrak. The Seattle-Portland trains had a 38% increase over Jan 1976, and the SAN JOAQUIN was up 48%. The latter train hadthe best on-time record in the Amtrak system in January--100%..... IT'S A BOY for Mr. & Mrs. Jim Bryant of Amtrak's Public Affairs Dept this month--their first. Now they will find that the fixed armrest in Amfleet cars is not suitable for the handling of small children..... EL PASO, TEXAS radio station KROD & Meston Travel Center are sponsoring a fun-trip to Disneyland for Easter

Week using the SUNSET LIMITED. The trip runs Apr 7-11 and costs $175 for adults...

THE AUTHORS OF the original GULF WIND proposal summarized in our 2nd Jan issue have pointed out some typos in the booklet: on the proposed schedule, Bay St. Louis should be listed as a flag stop and Tallahassee as a regular stop.....

AMTRAK'S VICE PRESIDENT and General Manager of National Operations Dave Watts wrote to the Rio Grande's Leonard J. Bernstein this month congratulating him on his Number One rating in RTN's latest reader rail survey. Dave added, "However, I would like to put you on notice that Amtrak will do everything in its power to take this honor away from you in 1977!"..... AUTO-TRAIN HAS PURCHASED the following sleeping cars from Amtrak: 2240 "Monticello", 2241 "Natural Bridge", 2301 "Honey-Bird", and 2803 "Volusia County"..... WHAT AMTRAK TRAINS elicit the fewest complaints from riders? By Amtrak's own tally, the LONE STAR, EMPIRE BUILDER, NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, and NIAGARA RAINBOW (!) top the list, with 5.5, 7.0, 8.4, and 8.9 complaints per 10,000 passengers respectively. The most complaints are garnered by the FLORIDIAN, with 28.2, the SILVER METEOR (26.1), the LAKE SHORE (25.6), and the BROADWAY (22.6). In sheer numbers, the SILVER METEOR and the SF ZEPHYR drew the most complaints, with 586 and 570, all this for the period July 1, 1975 to Jun 30, 1976. Temperature control and equipment condition usually accounted for the most complaints..... THE SILVER STREAK is still playing at local movie houses. The story that Amtrak turned down the movie makers and led them to go to Canada to film it is untrue. The makers didn't know where to go, so contacted the Santa Fe. That railroad turned them down because of a previous bad experience with filmmaking. After the film was finished, Amtrak talked with Hollywood film people and offered them some guidelines and encouragement for possible future movies. Director Arthur Hiller is from Canada, and probably felt it natural to try CP, who agreed to let them do the film. Interviewed on local TV, Hiller said that in sneak previews of the film the audiences gave it 94-98% "good" or "excellent" ratings, which was favorable. On the basis of these previews, Hiller cut about 5 minutes out of the film--who knows what train sequences were lost in that cutting? Another film, with antique steam train scenes in abundance, which we enjoyed is "The Seven Per- Cent Solution", concerning the meeting of Sherlock Holmes and Sigmund Freud.....

* * *

THE FLORIDA TRAINS have reportedly been used heavily to transport illegal drugs from Florida northward. Police in Richmond VA and Savannah GA have regularly searched the trains, using German shepherds to sniff out drugs, mostly marijuana and cocaine. Over 50 people were said to have been arrested in a 2-month period recently. An unconfirmed report has it that crew members of the trains have on occasion been involved in the drug traffic..... IN THESE PAGES recently (1st Jan issue) we published a denial by Amtrak that the corporation had made a cost proposal for a proposed Miami-Orlando Amfleet service. It turns out that Amtrak did indeed make such a proposal, dated Oct 22, 1976, which estimated a state share in projected deficits of $773,382 for Fiscal 1977.....

WITH CABINET MEMBERS required to disclose their finances, Transportation Secretary Adams last month said that his annual salary as a Congressman was $44,625, and he earned an additional $13,000 in lecture fees..... STATE OF OREGON has asked Amtrak to initiate a new stop for the COAST STARLIGHT at Albany OR..... ON-TIME PERFORMANCE of Amtrak trains in Jan hit some record lows, with the weather and the SDP40F engine problems responsible. On the whole, long distance trains were on time only 20.8% of the time, while short distance trains managed 58.1%. Both figures were well below the respective figures of Jan 1976--63.4 and 73.2. Performance ranged from 100.0% for the SAN JOAQUIN down to zero for the Chicago-Minneapolis route and the NIAGARA RAINBOW. Jan ridership systemwide was up 7% over Jan 1976 in spite of

the numerous train annulments..... SAN DIEGAN ROUTE will get two new grade separations in Santa Fe Springs, in southern L.A. county. The city council has completed an agreement with Santa Fe and has filed a request with the state PUC for funding..... ANOTHER TRAIN MOVIE just out is the low-budget film "Tracks," filmed aboard the MOUNTAINEER without Amtrak's official knowledge. Extras in the film are said to be actual passengers and crew, and hand-held cameras are said to lend much realism to the film. The movie created something of a sensation at the festival in Cannes last year..... AMTRAK'S FRENCH ELECTRIC locomotive X996 is now being tested in New Jersey..... AMTRAK HAS ADDED 7 full Amclub cars (see diagram last issue) to the Amfleet. Cars 20670-20674 and 20678-9 will join cars 20675-7, and they will go on trains 171, 172, 176, 177, 178, and 179. The two halves of the 33-seat car allow a smoking and a non-smoking section..... SOME AMCAFES AND Amcoaches now have special toilets for the handicapped, which are extra large with sliding doors..... THE CHESSIE SYSTEM this year will run a large number of steam excursions on the B&O as part of the railroad's 150th anniversary celebration. Engine 2101 will be used on them, and each train will consist of baggage car, 2 parlor cars, 1 snack coach, 12 coaches and an open platform observation.....

L. STANLEY CRANE has taken over Graham Claytor's position as head man at Southern Railway, as Claytor becomes Navy Secretary. On the topic of passenger trains, Crane told the Washington Post that there is not much potential for increasing passenger runs outside dense metropolitan corridors, and that buses are most efficient for long-haul service. He's obviously an original thinker..... ADD THE FOLLOWING timecards to the list of Feb 15 Amtrak timetables: form 10A, Minneapolis-Duluth; Form 100, NY-Baltimore-DC; form 101, NY-Phila.; form 102, Boston/Providence-NY; form 103, DC/Baltimore-Phila.; form 104, NY-Albany & Schenectady; and form 105, NY-Hartford & Springfield..... A CONGRESSIONAL BILL to make a federal offense of throwing hard objects at or shooting at a train has been introduced by Rep. William J. Hughes, Dem-NJ. Hearings on the bill were being heldthis month...

A MONTEREY NEWSPAPER, the Peninsula Herald, has editorialized against the proposed revival of the DEL MONTE: "if it flopped again, it might postpone into oblivion the time when a high speed monorail or similar system might be feasible." Wrong on two counts: the train wasn't a flop before, and a high-speed monorail to Monterey is only a dream..... STAMFORD AND BRIDGEPORT, CT are in a battle to determine which city will have the only train stop in the county when the rebuilding of the NE Corridor is completed, reports the NY Times. And the NE Corridor Improvement Project (DCP & Associates) this month opened a regional office in Washington DC, at 1201 Connecticut Ave NW..... THE MILWAUKEE ROAD and the Rock Island announced Mar 15 that they have agreed to merge their mainlines for a 243 mile stretch between Muscatine IA and Polo MO..... INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION approved, effective Mar 25, a 6% increase in intercity bus fares. The bus companies want 7% more effective May 15..... THE VERMONT STEAMTOWN owners are considering moving their location to Central Florida.....

RTN'S RAIL TRAVEL YEARBOOK is not ready for mailing yet. Many thanks for the patience of all those who have ordered our first yearbook. We will announce the completion of the book in these pages as soon as it is ready.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"You rode behind the Swede, right? You should see the Frenchman. Really racy. Wanna see a picture?"

--Amtrak President Paul Reistrup discussing leased Swedish and French locomotives with Philadelphia Inquirer reporter, in Inquirer Feb 7.

NEED PERSON to share hotel expenses during 4449 trip Birmingham-Oakland. Contact Peter P. Bretz c/o Ken Maylath 301-668-9560 or thru RTN.

LETTERS (continued from page 2)

It would probably be a better approach to determine patronage capabilities of various Amtrak runs than to consider Seattle (or any other major end point) over-served when discussing trains as business propositions, political handouts, or both. Paul Reistrup has said he'd like at least 2 trains per day on all routes. I think many WashARP members would be content with the one per day we already have (one is tri-weekly in off-season) if a better job were done designing and merchandising the product. Encouraging Amtrak to do this kind of planning work, rather than "daring" them to justify a run here or there, is what will be most helpful in keeping the trains in operation and helping to ensure a maximum amount of patronage.

Glenn Lee
Seattle, Washington

When Amtrak's basic system was defined by the DOT in 1971, the FLORIDIAN was routed thru the Alabama "boondocks" instead of thru the more populated Chattanooga-Atlanta-Macon route. For years, most rail advocates in the Southeast have been conducting quite an uphill struggle to reroute this train the logical way, thru Atlanta. During the last year, the student governments of the University of Florida and Mercer University have joined this struggle. That is why it is painful to read statements supporting the discontinuance of the train, because we might be getting near our goal. Not only is the FLORIDIAN operating on an illogical route, but also it is one of Amtrak's slowest trains, at an average speed of 42.1mph. Regardless of these facts, consider the following statistics:

(1) Of Amtrak's 32 routes (the NE Corridor included as one route), the Chicago-Florida route ranks 20th in loss per train mile at $13.83. In other words, 12 other routes are poorer performers. (2) It ranks 21st in revenue/total expenses ratio, at 0.25. Eleven routes are poorer performers. (3) It ranks 22nd in revenue percent of system/train miles percent of system ratio, at 0.54. Ten other routes are poorer performers. (4) It ranks 21st in revenue percent of system/total expenses percent of system ratio, at 0.60. Eleven routes are poorer performers. I personally oppose the discontinuation of any route until they are improved by such measures as speed...

O. F. Hernandez-Campos
Gainesville, Florida

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TIMETABLES - Selling "Best of 60's" Ten System TTs - $10. SSAE for new list quarterly. Carl Loucks, 199 Wayland, Hamden CT 06518.

MR. REISTRUP: If you have to relocate the MEMPHIS AMTRAK STATION, the most logical area is Flicker Street (across from police station), or where the Union R.R., L&N, and Flicker Street come together; this is in the approximate population center and easy to get to. Placing the station in Whitehaven/South Memphis would be mistake--too far from where most Memphians live and the street system is highly congested. Richard Johnson, Memphis, TN.

YOU'RE INVITED--MEXICO RAILFAN FUN-TRAIN--July 17-31, 1977--Copper Canyon, Taxco, Acapulco, Mexico City, Guadalajara, Metro, Street Cars, locomotive ride, join anywhere (trip starts in Oklahoma), Mexico cool in summer--write MIDWEST TRAVEL SERVICE, 2936R Bella Vista, Midwest City, OK, 73110--Phone 405-732-0566.

Railroad, Traction, Trolleys, Airlines, Shipping, Expositions and Americana uniform buttons. Stamp for list. J. Lajoie, 22 Stevens, Methuen, Mass. 01844.

4449 RESERVATIONS through Let's Travel Tours, PO Box 2768, Riverside CA 92516. Phone (714) 684-7458. Individual reservations for any portion of the itinerary. Also special group package from Los Angeles Apr 22 to Phoenix and return Apr 24.

CAREER RAILROADER seeks R.R. employment. Have been NYCRR secretary, D&RGW office manager, DT&I traveling salesman, CNJ intermodal manager, and AMTRAK sales rep until position abolished as part of economy move. At 47 I have 27 years service. Highest references from my former accounts, supervisors, and fellow employees. H. R. Ashley, 41 Anderson Ave., Scarsdale, NY 10583.

UNIQUE PUBLIC TIMETABLE GRAB BAGS, all material 1940s. $25 worth only $16. Also have the finest clear plastic slip covers for public TTs ever offered, 8¢ each, 100/$7.50, 200/$14, 500/$30 postpd. Tom Coval, 21 E.Robin Rd, Holland PA 18966.

Weekend 4449 excursion departs Los Angeles April 22 to Phoenix, join steam spec. at Phoenix on Apr 23. Overnight in Yuma Apr 23, arriving Los Angeles Apr 24. Chair car $130, slpr $160; deduct $25 for children under 12. Includes lodging & transfers in Yuma. Pacific Railroad Society, PO Box 70, East Irvine CA 92650.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads $25 per half-page (maximum size--4x5 inches); $12.50 quarter page (camera-ready). Write: Message Media, Ad Dept., Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Thank you!